Aeris Day

Communication Capstone

Project Proposal Draft

Topic Description

YouTube has been an extraordinary part of the world wide web since its founding in 2005, becoming a staple in many people’s daily lives. Since the website’s creation, it has resulted in millions of content creators across the globe. One of these content creators is a woman named Trisha Paytas who has dedicated a total of 12 years to the platform. In the modern day, she is known as an exceedingly controversial YouTuber who profits off of seemingly offensive content. Many people have come together to attempt to “cancel” Paytas, but none have succeeded. The core of my research will be exploring Trisha Paytas’ marketing strategies to stay relevant on the internet through the usage of analysis and social psychology. While controversy is often seen as a negative concept, I believe that Paytas has found a way of making it beneficial rather than harmful.

Justification of Topic

I have been an active YouTube consumer for over eight years and have encountered Trisha Paytas’ content many times since then either through her own account, curiosity spurred from her controversy, or her friends’ videos. I firmly believe that her strategies in marketing are ingenious despite the negativity she receives as she has sustained a strong fanbase and kept her name afloat while many other YouTubers have faded out of the limelight. The topic of Paytas and her work is worth scholarly inquiry as it can be used to explore the idea of controversial marketing, the effects it has on society, and how it works.

Controversial marketing is certainly not the only reason to study this specific topic. Another popular subject in modern day is the concept of cancel culture which essentially stems from the idea of spreading hate towards a person or organization for a particular action they have done in order to either enforce accountability or remove their voice from a platform. The interpretation of cancel culture is largely twisted depending upon the person, but more often than not it will feature a grandiose amount of hatred and negativity. Being “canceled” has been a fear of influencers in recent years though there are few others who have been “canceled” as many times as Trisha Paytas. Paytas thrives off of this subject and will often purposefully go out of her way to make controversial content as it drives people to post about her, eventually causing her name to be spread all across the Internet. This method draws a large audience to her content and, regardless of reasoning for this audience’s attraction to said content, she profits off of views. She has proven that no one can truly be “canceled” off of the internet if the person simply does not care, or actively seeks it out, and I intend to illustrate this through my research.

Research Questions

1. How has Trisha Paytas managed to stay successful and relevant on the internet for 12 years despite her controversy?
2. Can someone truly be “canceled” off of the internet?
3. Why are controversial content creators still given a platform for their voice?

The research questions stated above will all be extremely relevant to my research and I fully intend to answer each of them to some degree. The first research question is easily the most related to my subject matter as it is directly related to Trisha Paytas’ work. I intend to answer this question by diving deep into her YouTube channel and social media platforms, as well as comparing and contrasting her experiences with several other content creators related to her. The second research question, while it may seemingly have a simple yes or no answer, is much more complicated than one might think. Two content creators who had a falling out with Paytas have, perhaps, been “canceled” to a higher degree than her or most others. I plan to use those creators in comparison as evidence to prove that, while no one can truly be “canceled” off of the internet, their reach can be vastly reduced as many interpretations of cancel culture intended. The final research question is going to be highlighted as a means of showing even controversial creators will always be welcome on social media. At the end of the day, many influencers will still have a platform to voice their opinions because social medias either will not ban a popular user or they have avoided violations of community guidelines. Furthermore, I will explain the ideas of controversy at its core on social media and how this may or may not always be a bad prospect.

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